

DEATH BEFORE THE SIN OF ADAM: A FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPT IN THEISTIC EVOLUTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

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Charles Darwin establishes theoretically that evolution cannot operate without struggle and death. Therefore, evolution presupposes the presence of death on earth for aeons prior to the appearance of *homo sapiens*. This means, for theistic evolution, that a long history of death preceded the appearance of Adam, implying that death is not connected to Adam's sin. The purpose of the dissertation is to discover how this latter notion impacts evangelical theology with respect to the atonement and other areas in terms of possible theological implications.

After reviewing the literature on the topic in chapter 1, the dissertation discusses the historical background (chapter 2) showing that the problem has been pondered by thinkers throughout the Intertestamental and the Christian eras. The survey in chapter 3 shows that the concept of death before Adam's sin is currently being advocated, among others, by evangelical scholars in North America, and that in so doing, evangelical scholarship has been influenced by theistic evolution.

Chapter 4 examines the biblical data concerning the problem in the light of contemporary biblical scholarship. It surveys the relationship between human sin and death in the world of nature in the Old Testament, and offers exegetical considerations on New Testament passages, particularly in the Pauline corpus, where a cause-effect connection between sin and death seems to be prominent.

Chapter 5 critically analyzes scholarly affirmations of death prior to the Fall, which result in serious problems for evangelical theology. This is the case, above all, with the evangelical theology of the atonement because the concept of death before sin undermines the biblical causeeffect connection between sin and death thus challenging the basis for Christ's work of atonement understood in a substitutionary sense. Other important theological areas negatively impacted include the goodness of God and the goodness of the creation, the authority of Scriptures, the doctrine of humanity, and eschatology.

The dissertation concludes (chapter 6), that the theological implications in these areas are of such significance that the concept of death before sin cannot be incorporated within evangelical theology without altering the soundness and theological integrity of the system.